



# Fun without COST!

By Suki Kangas

# Introduction

Fun is a very important part of children's ministry. Games and activities in class help to attract more children to your class to hear about Jesus. Fun activities are also a great way for children to learn, easily keeping them engaged and interested in the lesson. Some students learn better by listening, but some learn better by seeing or by doing something. Most ideas for children's ministry require some materials, but this book is full of ideas that require no materials except a few rocks or leaves. We assume that most of you are reading this booklet on your phone, so a phone is included in a couple ideas. Otherwise, no purchased materials are included in this book. May you have much fun with the children as you watch God change their hearts and lives through your class!

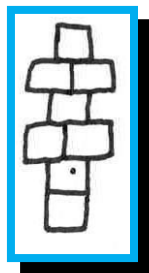
## Tic-tac-toe in the dirt



Divide the class into 2 teams. Draw a tic-tac-toe board on the ground with a stick. Ask the students review questions about the lesson, alternating by teams. When a team answers correctly, they place their marker (x or o) on a square. The team that gets 3 of their markers in a straight line wins!

## Hopscotch

Draw squares on the ground like this pattern. You can also use it as a memory verse game by placing enough squares for each word in the memory verse. Children must hop from one square to the next, saying a word from the verse. Toss a small rock onto one of the squares, and the students must skip that square and jump over it.



## Pass the clap

Have students form a standing circle. Tell students that they will be passing a clap around the circle. Choose a starting point and have one person turn to the next person and have them both clap at the same time. The second student then turns to the next person and they clap at the same time. The key to success is eye contact and watching each other's hands in the beginning. If the game gets sloppy, ask students to slow down. Another clap may also be introduced at another point in the circle so that there are two claps traveling around the circle. You can use this game as a memory verse review by having them say a word of the memory verse in sequence with each clap.



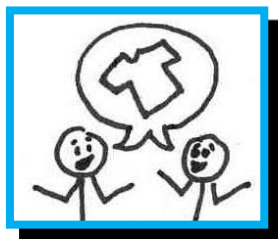
## Illustrations on your mobile



Before class, look for images that go with your lesson. Some examples are modern photos of the places mentioned in the Bible story, processes like threshing wheat, drawings and illustrations of the Bible story, faces of people with the emotions that the characters in the Bible story may have felt. The idea is that the children have something visual to learn in another way besides hearing, without having to print or draw anything.

## “Find someone who...”

This is a great ice breaker to get to know each other. The teacher calls out an instruction like, “Find someone who is wearing a shirt the same color as you!” Then all the students pair up with other students wearing the same shirt color. Call out more instructions, like birthday in the same month, the same favorite TV show, favorite food, shoe size, number of siblings, etc. Try to include things that require a little bit of talking to figure out. Also include differences, not just things that are the same, for example birthdays 6 months apart or cats vs. dogs.



## Pass the stick

To begin, have everyone sit in a circle select one person to be “it,” and give them the stick. Then the teacher calls out a review question from the lesson like, “Name 5 characters from today’s Bible lesson.” Everyone begins passing the stick to the person on their right while the person who is “it” must name 5 characters from the Bible story before the stick returns to them. If they do not finish, they are still “it.” If they do finish, then whoever is holding the stick right when they finish the answer is now “it.” Include other review questions,

like quoting the memory verse, recounting the drama, or reviewing past lessons.

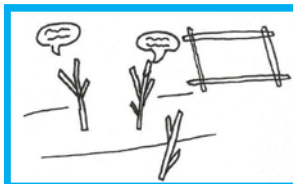


## Heroes game

In the syllabus “Heroes of the Faith” is a fun card game. Here is an alternative that requires no materials at all. In the instructions for the game is a long list of various situations. The goal is for the children to guess which value is needed in that situation (faith, integrity, strength, heart, obedience, and humility). Designate 6 locations in the classroom or outside for each of those values. When you call out a situation, the children run to the location representing the value they think is needed.



## Stick story



Gather sticks, rocks, or leaves and use them like dolls or action figures and act out the Bible story with them. You can also have the children take turns to act out the Bible story, letting each child play the part of one character in the story. For a more elaborate story, use sticks to mark the walls of little buildings, streets, and

scenes for the stick characters.

## Dramatize the story

Acting out the story can be very fun. One way is to coordinate some volunteers ahead of time. Another way (possibly more fun for the students) is to have the students themselves act out the story as you narrate it. If you have a small class, involve all students in the story. If you have a large class, ask for volunteers. While you narrate the story, pause and give them time to act out each piece.



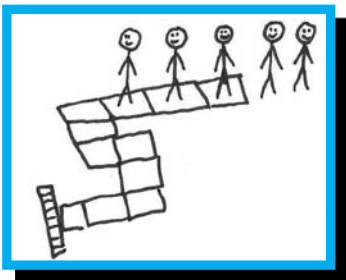
## Leaf heart illustration



Before class, get a large leaf from outside. Tear pieces away until you are left with a heart shape. Use the dark side of the leaf as an example of a heart without God and flip it to show the light side as an illustration of God changing our hearts.

## Game board review

If you are inside and have tile or some spots on the floor, consider them like squares on a gameboard. If you are outside, draw squares in the dirt. Form 2 teams and have the children line up in front of the first square, marker, etc. for your made-up game board. Ask a review question from the lessons, alternating between teams. When a team answers the question correctly, the first person moves forward 1 square and a teammate takes their place behind them. As they answer questions correctly, the team can gradually move forward one square at a time. The first team to arrive at the last square wins. Prepare review questions ahead of time to have enough questions to complete the game board.



## “Sink or swim” review game



Divide the class into two teams and have them move to opposite sides of the room. Prepare review questions ahead of time from previous Sunday school lessons. On your phone you can write them in some note taking app or you can send a text to a volunteer. For the game, alternate between teams and ask the team a review question. If they get the question wrong, one of their team members “sinks” by sitting on the ground or moving to an area on the side. If a team gets the question right, they can sink a player from the opposite team or save one of their own sunken team members.

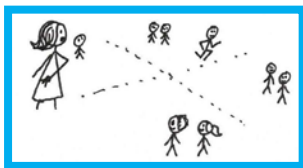
## Map in the dirt

For a Bible story where a character travels to different places (Paul’s travels, Jonah riding a boat toward Tarshish then a whale back to the coast then going to Nineveh), look for a map online on your phone. Clear a space of dirt then draw a map and place rocks to mark different locations. You can also involve the children in drawing the map or placing rocks for different cities as another teaching technique that involves both sight and action.

If you have enough students and space, make a bigger map by having the children themselves represent cities, or a line of children representing a coastline.



## Four Corners



Designate 4 corners in the classroom or the teaching area with the numbers 1 through 4. When the teacher says, “Ready, go!” children run to the corner they want to. The teacher then calls out a number and all the students at that numbered corner are out. Repeat this until there is only 1 child left. To avoid materials and avoid bias, the teacher can hold their hand behind their back with a chosen number before saying, “Ready, go!”

## Freeze dance

Play a song on your mobile device or sing and clap. While the music is playing, children dance. As soon as the music stops, the children must freeze in whatever position they are in and cannot move. Anyone who moves is out of the game and must sit down. Play until there is only one winner.



## “The sleeping song”



This is a fun activity for small children. Have the children pretend to sleep while you say, “Sleeping, sleeping, all the children are sleeping. And when they woke up, they were all ---.” Call out various animals, insects, or objects, and the children act it out.

## Story go-round

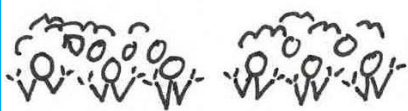
Work together to make up a silly story, with each person adding a phrase. The first person starts the story with something like, “A little boy named Fred was at the park when...” Each person adds a piece to the story. The sillier, the better!

Older students: partway through the silly story, pause the story and ask how the characters can put into practice what they have learned from the lesson.



## Rain sound effect with crowd

During a Bible story that involves rain or a storm, do this activity with a medium to large group of children. Divide the group into 2 to 4 groups. Show them 4 steps of rain sound effects that they will be doing: rubbing hands together, snapping fingers, clapping, then striking their legs while stomping on the ground and making wind sounds with their mouths. Begin by pointing to the first group and have them do the first action. Then point to the second to have them start, then the third. Gradually point to the groups again for the next movement in the sequence and so on until it sounds like a great storm. Then gradually point to each group to have them do a smaller action until it sounds like the storm has passed and all is quiet again.



## Scavenger hunt for outdoor things



Tell the children a list of items they need to search for outside. For example, a red rock, a leaf that an insect has eaten, a twig with one branch, etc. Whoever finishes the list of items first wins.

Just like this hunt for specific things, we can always be looking for God's working all around us. Like finding a specific color rock or a specific leaf, we can find kindness or humility in someone's actions, watch for God changing someone's heart, or look for God

developing these things in our own lives.

## Relay races!

Races and relay races are great because there can be a lot of variety without any materials. For a generic relay race, divide the players into equal teams and have each team stand in a line. The first person in line must run to a designated finish line (a volunteer, a tree, a rock, a crack in the floor, etc.) and then run back. The first player touches the second player's hand, and at that moment the second player can run the same course. Continue for each member of the team. The first team to finish is the winner.

### Variations:

- Hop on one foot
- Jump
- Spin
- Crawl on hands and knees
- Each foot must cross in front of the other foot
- With each step forward, touch heel to toe of other foot
- Pairs: grab hands with a partner and spin to the finish line
- Obstacles: if your area has several trees, large rocks, or if your classroom has chairs, set a more interesting course to run instead of a straight line
- Say the memory verse at the finish line. Have one person standing there per team to confirm that the memory verse was quoted correctly. If the verse was quoted incorrectly, the player must say it again before running back to his team.



## Leaf blower race

Gather small, light-weight leaves. The players each get a leaf and race to blow the leaf to the finish line. They cannot touch the leaf with any part of their body.



## Nose race



Give each player a small rock. Make sure the rocks are similar in size, smoothness and roundness to make it fair for everyone. The players must push the rock to the finish line using only their nose. If they touch it with their hands, they must go back to the starting line and start over. The first player to cross the finish line with the rock wins.

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